

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Alternative Educators

FROM: Sue Foxx, Consultant  
Division of Educational Options

DATE: October 19, 2007

RE: Computer-based Courseware and Distance Education

Computer-based courseware, as well as distance education courses, are used in traditional schools, summer school programs, credit recovery programs, and alternative education programs in a variety of ways. No matter how the content is delivered, each school corporation or accredited nonpublic school must determine that rigorous academic standards (see <http://www.doe.state.in.us/asap/academicstandards.html>) are covered if credit is to be awarded for a state approved course. (See <http://www.doe.state.in.us/publications/courses.html>). The intent of this memo is to clarify when a waiver is needed, how Highly Qualified Teacher (HQT) provisions apply<sup>1</sup>, and how credit is awarded.

### COMPUTER SOFTWARE USED AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE

If instructional software is used as a *resource* in a course, it is considered supplemental material, and, much like workbooks or lab equipment, it may be used at the discretion of the school corporation without a [waiver in the School Improvement Plan](#) or a [Nonstandard Course or Curriculum Waiver](#). This presumes that *direct* instruction for the course is provided by a teacher who holds a valid Indiana license for the content area and meets HQT provisions, if applicable. Grades are assigned by the teacher; credit is awarded by the school or school district. No textbook waiver is needed since the material is supplemental to the textbook. Charging the student for software use as part of the textbook rental fee is a local decision.

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<sup>1</sup> NCLB requires LEAs to ensure that public elementary school teachers are highly qualified to teach the basic elementary school curricula, and that junior high, middle and secondary school teachers are highly qualified to teach each core academic subject teaching assignment. The core academic subjects are defined as the following: English, reading or language arts, mathematics, science, foreign languages, civics and government, economics, history, geography, and fine arts.

## COMPUTER-BASED, CORRESPONDENCE OR PACKET COURSES FOR CREDIT

Whether courses are delivered through computer-based courseware, online courseware, or by correspondence or packet formats, they must satisfy the following requirements:

- The course(s) are State Board approved courses or have a waiver in the school improvement plan or a nonstandard course waiver; and
- The course(s) address the content defined in Indiana's Academic Standards for each course, if appropriate; and
- Instruction and content must be designed or reviewed by a Highly Qualified Teacher.

It is recommended that schools review the course titles and content in order to make any adjustments necessary to ensure alignment with Indiana's Academic Standards, if appropriate. It is also recommended that the local school board record its decision to grant credit for these courses in its minutes.

In some instances, the classroom teacher functions primarily as a facilitator (i.e., is not providing direct instruction) and does not need to be Highly Qualified (HQ) under No Child Left Behind (NCLB). NCLB highly qualified provisions apply only to teachers in core academic areas who provide *direct* instruction. Facilitators, however, must be licensed teachers.

*\*NOTE: To be an approved Alternative Education Program, the teacher/facilitator must hold a valid Indiana teaching license and be employed by the school corporation. For more information, go to <http://www.doe.state.in.us/hqt/pdf/ComputerBasedCourseClarification.pdf>.*

Some computer-based courseware can be accessed online from remote locations, such as a student's home. Local school corporations may decide whether to allow students to log on from home in order to accelerate course completion or credit recovery. If approved, it is strongly recommended that all assessments be completed at the school.

Student progress should be monitored through a documented process that ensures that a highly qualified teacher is accessible if a student needs assistance. Documentation in the form of assessments, assignments, computer tracking data, student portfolio, or other means is appropriate. Final grades for individual courses should be assigned by the local school.

If the instructional time included in the course does not meet the definition of "Credit" in 511 IAC 6.-7.1-1, the school must ask for a waiver in its School Improvement Plan to allow the school to grant credit on the basis of satisfactory completion of the course objectives rather than instructional time. If the School Improvement Plan is accepted by the local school board and the Indiana Department of Education, the waiver is approved. A Non-standard Course and Curriculum Waiver may also be submitted to the Division of Program Development, if the School Improvement Plan option is not chosen.

**Students who have failed the course but already met the seat time requirement do not have to meet the seat time requirement again; therefore, no waiver is required for Credit Recovery, whether it occurs during the school year or during summer school.**

Questions about whether computer-based courseware costs can be included in textbook rental fees should be addressed to the State Board of Accounts at 317-232-2520.

## **DISTANCE OR VIRTUAL EDUCATION COURSES**

There are many sources for distance or virtual education within Indiana such as the Indiana Virtual Academy or the Indiana Online Academy, as well as from post secondary providers around the country. These courses use the internet or video conferencing technology to deliver courses designed and taught by Highly Qualified Teachers who are licensed in the content area. The teachers maintain an online or virtual presence while they deliver content, monitor progress, and conduct assessments. Schools that choose to recognize credits earned in this manner should ensure that the institution offering the course is regionally or nationally accredited and that the courses are State Board approved courses that meet Indiana Academic Standards, if appropriate. In these cases, direct instruction is provided by the instructor on the internet or through video conferencing. That instructor must meet HQ teacher requirements.

## Quick Reference Guide

**No matter how the instruction is delivered, in order to receive course credit, courses must meet course titles, descriptions, and Indiana Standards as appropriate.**

### **COMPUTER SOFTWARE USED AS AN INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCE**

- Computer software is used as a resource or supplemental material, like a workbook or lab equipment. No waiver is needed.
- Direct instruction is provided by a highly qualified teacher who holds a valid Indiana license for the content area.
- Classroom teacher grants credit.
- Questions about whether computer software costs can be included in textbook rental fees or charged to the student should be addressed to the State Board of Accounts at 317-232-2520.

### **COMPUTER-BASED, CORRESPONDENCE OR PACKET COURSES FOR CREDIT**

- Computer-based, online and correspondence or packet courses allow students to work independently for credit recovery or credit acceleration.
- The course content or packet must be developed by a highly qualified teacher in that content area.
- The school board should approve the curriculum and method of delivery and agree to award credit.
- The classroom teacher is considered a facilitator (i.e., not providing *direct* instruction) and therefore does not need to be highly qualified in the content area but does need to hold a valid Indiana teacher's license.
- The school or school district grants the course credit. The facilitating teacher *recommends* to an appropriately licensed teacher that a grade be assigned and credit be awarded.
- Students should complete a minimum of 75 hours per high school credit **UNLESS** the school obtained a waiver from 511 IAC 6.1-1-2 (Credit Definition) in its School Improvement Plan or a Non-Standard Course or Curriculum waiver which is available at [http://www.doe.state.in.us/opd/pdf/Course\\_Curr\\_Appl\\_0201.pdf](http://www.doe.state.in.us/opd/pdf/Course_Curr_Appl_0201.pdf) .  
*No waiver from 511 IAC 6.1-1-2 is required for students who have previously failed a course OR who are considered a High Ability student (see Indiana Code 20-36-1).*
- Questions about whether computer-based courseware, virtual course, or correspondence costs can be included in textbook rental fees or charged to the student should be addressed to the State Board of Accounts at 317-232-2520.
- Some computer-based courseware is available online. It is a local school corporation decision whether to allow students to log on from home in order to accelerate course completion or credit recovery. If they do, it is strongly recommended that all assessments be completed at the school.

## **DISTANCE OR VIRTUAL EDUCATION COURSES**

- Distance Education courses and virtual learning programs are delivered primarily online or via video conferencing technology. These courses must be taught by highly qualified licensed teachers who maintain a virtual presence and who provide direct instruction.
- Upon successful completion, the high school may award credit.
- Distance or virtual education providers must be regionally or nationally accredited (see 511 IAC 6-7-6).
- The school should determine if the course meets state standards and whether the school will grant the credit before the student registers. A school board may choose to provide a list of approved providers to minimize confusion.
- Questions about whether distance or virtual course costs can be included in textbook rental fees or charged to the student should be addressed to the State Board of Accounts at 317-232-2520.

### **Additional questions and answers:**

1. Can home school or non-public school students participate in online, correspondence, or packet courses or distance learning offered by a school corporation?  
*It is a local decision whether these students could be enrolled and participate in online, correspondence, packet, or distance learning opportunities.*
2. Can a student participate in online learning courses beyond their full-time schedule?  
*Yes. However, it is recommended that the student get written confirmation that the credit will be recognized upon successful completion prior to enrolling in the course.*
3. Can a school district limit enrollment in computer-based or online courses?  
*Placement in these types of courses is a local decision. However, it is recommended that the school have entrance criteria and maintain a waiting list to ensure equity.*
4. Can a school district limit the number of courses a student may complete through computer-based courseware, online instruction, or correspondence/packets?  
*Yes, it is a local decision.*
5. Can the school charge fees for online supplemental materials?  
*Questions about whether computer-based program costs can be included in textbook rental fees should be addressed to the State Board of Accounts at 317-232-2520.*